1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

the money weekly to his wives for petty market purchases and does all major purchases of food and clothing on his own. He also pays for ceremonies, transportation, and most of the gift-giving engaged in by himself and others in the household. Except for the sale of cooked food, pottery production, and female hair dressing, men control all income producing work of any kind in the entire society.

Households as Consumers

Almost all people in Bornu use, obtain, or eat the things they need because they are members of particular households or are related to a nearby household as a subordinate of its household head. The patterns of consumption vary enormously from that of a rural peasant to that of a wealthy trader or political leader in the city. However, the vast bulk of the population stays within a fairly uniform range that involves a relatively low level of consumption. Most families, especially those in rural areas, eat two meals a day; one between 8:00 and 9:00 A.M. and the other in the early evening between 8:00 and 9:00 P.M. Men of the compound and their male friends eat together while the women eat separately. Smaller snacks are eaten during the day, and in the city it is common to eat more often especially among salaried workers who return home for breakfast about 9:00 to 9:30 A.M. and finish the work day at 2:00 to 2:30 P.M. at which time they eat a noon-day meal. The average rural household consumes about eight pounds of millet (the staple grain food) every day, or about one and a half tons per year. The millet comes from farm products used by the household plus any buying that has to be done to augment this. For those few at the higher end of the social scale food bills can be enormous. One political leader in the capital claims that during his heyday he used to feed as many as seventy people a day and had to have a very smoothly-running household to get this much food processed and ready for his guests on a daily basis. In the ordinary peasant household men give their wives money on a weekly basis to purchase condiments for the staple food and sometimes meat as well although many of the richer men prefer to buy meat themselves. The money, usually anywhere from thirty cents to about $1.50 is given to the wife, or to each wife, or sometimes to the senior wife who then divides it among the co-wives.[1]

To an outsider Kanuri food seems almost infinitely expandable. I have often watched one bowl of food brought into the presence of a household head. He would glance around at the half dozen or so of us present and then ask us to join him, as he had to do by custom. On the other hand household heads have complained to me that they feed too many. "But what can we do?" they say, friends and would-be clients or subordinates know when food is to be brought, and they simply appear, at which point custom forces the host to be gracious. Those who eat continually at a friend's or a relative's house are in his debt and he may use their services as he wishes. This is one of the principal means by which clientship starts to operate. If the client eats with the patron, and the patron asks for services, and if both are satisfied, the relationship soon becomes an established one.

Clothing, like food, is in the hands of the household head although, and as

[1] Nigerian money is in pounds, shillings, and pence. I have translated values here at the rate of $2.80 American to £1 Nigerian.

Lastly gum arabic, which is the base from which gum drops
137 are made, is collected from the kolkol tree (Acacia arabica).
222 The trees grow wild, and are fairly common in the area of Geidam. The villagers collect the solidified resin and sell the
[434] gum arabic to the companies. This is a secondary source of cash, and the distribution of the trees is fairly limited.

• [262] Some species of plants are gathered for food. The leaves of the kuka tree are the most important, and are commonly used
224 in food preparation. Hunting is of minor importance. Full-time hunters are almost never found. In the larger villages and towns organized hunts are carried out by the young men. In such cases the game, typically gazelle and guinea fowl, are
226 surrounded and brought down by thrown sticks. Fishing is carried out in the rivers and in Lake Chad. Fish are caught by a variety of means--they are trapped in large woven traps, netted, and hooked, and in Lake Chad larger species are harpooned.
[262] Fish are an important food source for communities on the shores
[184] of rivers and lakes, but are not generally important for the Kanuri as a whole.

438 Trade always has played an important part in the Kanuri
443 economy, and this would naturally follow in a society where
[433] rural-urban distinctions are centuries old. The kasuqu, or
[369] market, is a central part of every Kanuri town. The Kanuri
[366] market is primarily and almost exclusively a local market, where village farmers can sell agricultural produce and buy the products made by artisans of the town. In addition, limited regional exchange is effected through the market. External

782 untary alms. Zakat, the tithe for the church, is not given
[793] by the Kanuri. Consequently the clergy are dependent entirely
[792] on sadaka. Koranic specialists who devote themselves entirely to study of the Koran, and to the teaching of the Koran are called Malams. The Malams are supported by sadaka which devout Kanuri are expected to give.

788 The fifth and last Pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage.
177 All who can manage the pilgrimage to Mecca (haj) without hardship are expected at some time to make this trip. The Mais and Shehus undertook the pilgrimage, and in fact, el Kanemi spent some years in Mecca. Large numbers of the Kanuri populace have also made the pilgrimage. Its effect has been to tie Kanuri society to the larger world of Islam, in that way to share in a larger community and to bring back to Bornu new ideas and new products. Pilgrims who travel across the width of Africa by truck from Lake Chad to the Red Sea, find that they have a common bond with other Moslems in the towns through which they pass.

78 The nature of religious observance among the Kanuri can be
182 seen in their adherence to the Pillars of Islam. But Islam
[576] enters into Kanuri life at numerous additional points: in the
[275] common greetings between two individuals when they meet; in the
[262] abstention from any form of alcoholic beverage which tends to
[771] be widely observed; in food taboos; in Koranic charms which most
[757] individuals wear; and in the use of ink from verses of the Koran
796 as cures for illness. Most life crises are marked by religious

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796 though it was admitted that there were Kanuri who drank water
785 in secret. In Maiduguri there are Kanuri who eat openly in
183 the market-place during Ramadan, but Geidam is too small a town
[369] for anyone to violate religious custom so blatantly. As Rama-
785 dan in 1957 fell in the hottest and most uncomfortable time of
512 the year, fasting, and in particular abstaining from drinking,
is very demanding. Most people radically alter their schedules.
During Ramadan they customarily rise at 3 A.M. at the call of
a waker, pray and drink something and then remain up doing
their work until sunrise (6 A.M.). They then work for an ad-
ditional two or three hours until the sun is high in the sky,
when they retire to sleep until three or four in the afternoon.
[462] From four until sunset (6:45 P.M.) people again work, and the
women pound and grind millet. At sunset the Ladan calls to an-
[262] nounce the end of the day's fast. People then drink quantities
[272] of a porridge made of millet and soured milk (bəlam). At ten
or eleven in the evening people eat the one hearty meal of the
[517] day. Activities such as visiting, chatting and strolling con-
tinue on into the night. During Ramadan, the entire daily
schedule is shifted so that people sleep through the hottest
hours of the day, work during the cooler periods at sunrise and
at sunset, break the fast with a light meal which is followed
by a heavy meal some hours later, and spend much of the night
in leisure activities. In actual fact little work is accomplished
in this month.

785 As the sun set on Tuesday, April 30th, everyone looked
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796 spears in salute to him. The crowd then dispersed and people
[579] dressed in fine robes visited one another and exchanged greetings. Later that evening horsemen rode once again in salute on the dandal; this time the kabuna were joined by a number of townspeople.

796 On the second day of Ngumari Ashembe an enormous feast, at-
574 tended by about three hundred people, was held at the Ajari at eight in the morning. Some two hundred and fifty people were
[563] seated in the outermost courtyard of the Ajari. These included the kabuna, the more important of the Koranic Malams of the town, and a number of the important traders, many of the latter Hausa. In an inner chamber were the thirty-one members of the NA staff. At one end of the inner chamber, on a raised section sat the Ajia along with the Alkali, the Chief Scribe, the Treasurer, a representative of the Shehu, and Malam Jalo. After a time, the group in the inner chamber made up of the NA staff moved to an inner courtyard, split up into six smaller groups,
[262] and food was brought out. In the inner courtyard pancakes (senasen) were served, followed by rice bari (porridge), whole roast chickens, and large sections of ram roasted in a hole in
[272] the earth. Orange squash was drunk with the meal itself. After
[302] the meal, kola nuts were distributed, and after all had washed,
[576] perfume was passed around. Lastly, prayers were said, and all rose, said "Allah ngubə ro" (literally meaning, "May Allah prolong your days"--the traditional phrase of deference said to
[431] men of higher status) to Yerima, and left. Throughout this time,

434 through bad debts or begging then, as he said, 10/- would be like 12/-, or perhaps as much as 14/- (he rejected 15/- as too high, 11/- as too low). That is to say, about 30% of his craft income from meat sales is lost through bad debts and the nature of Kanuri social relations, wherein property differentials are noticed, and giving of property by its owner validates the differential. Because Mala Bukar is a relatively well-off man (for Magumeri) he must, unless he wishes to be considered miserly, mean and unsociable, give away some of his wealth in order to maintain the status he has achieved through its possession.

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Consumption

511 128 In order to obtain a comparative index of living standards for the Kanuri in terms of western measures, the consumption data in the following section are translated into money values calculated on the basis of the average household size in the sample survey of cultivators. Although this translation into western equivalents is a constructed figure, it gives a more precise definition to consumption practices than a merely qualitative description.

Food

264 For the peasant population, meals are customarily taken twice a day. A man, his sons past puberty, other male compound members, and possibly other male neighbours eat once in the morning, usually between 8 and 9 a.m. (lashi) and once in the evening again between 8 and 9 p.m. (bulta). Young children may or may not eat with the male head, but usually do so if he is alone. The two main meals consist of millet flour (penisetum typhoideum) made into porridge or dumplings (buri argumbe) over which soup is poured, containing vegetables, fish or meat, groundnut-oil, and salt, as well as other condiments, especially red peppers. Occasional meals or snacks are taken during markets

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262 [264] [782] where cooked food is sold, or at ceremonial gatherings when there is generally more meat present in the food, due to the practice of killing a goat or a sheep at almost all periodic religious ceremonies and rites de passage. Rice, wheat, guinea-corn, maize, boiled roots and leaves, squashes, cucumber, tomatoes, occra, groundnuts, milk, chicken, butter, cooked meats, and millet beer brewed by pagans are also periodic but small additions to the normal peasant diet.(1)

S 11 In the survey sample the average amount consumed per day per capita was 1.24 zaka(2) with almost the entire range (except for two cases) running from one to one and a half zaka per person. Using the zaka as roughly 1.6 lbs. of millet (it varies in size during the year) this means that for the most part the rural peasant eats 1.6 to 2.4 [435] lbs. of millet per day with a mean intake of 1.9 lbs. per person. The price of millet in Magumeri (1955-57) varied from 22/- to 20/- per bag (120 zaka), but remained for long periods at 25/- per bag. It follows then that for the period 1955-57 the average rural household of 3.9 (from the sample survey) or roughly four persons, required at least twenty-five bags of millet per year or about thirty-one pounds sterling in cash value at the prevailing market prices, as a minimum subsistence amount for their millet needs.

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[146] (1) From tests done in other sections of Northern Nigeria, it is estimated that the average peasant diet in the region as a whole, varies between 2400-2900 calories per day, with a general deficiency in proteins and vitamins, see Nicol, B.C., Nutrition in Nigeria, British Journal of Nutrition, Vol. 3 (1943) 25-43.

[804] (2) This was corroborated in the budget data. A zaka is a small gourd which is used as the standard measure in buying and selling small quahtities of grain, beans and nuts. Four zaka equal one darum (a medium-sized calabash); four darum equal one sa (a large calabash), and there are 7.5 to 7.8 sa per buhu or large bag of grain, beans or nuts, i.e. about 120 zaka per buhu. Zaka of millet were weighed, measured and averaged to obtain English equivalents.

511 The expenditure for condiments, vegetables, cooking oil, meat or fish, etc. varies from household to household, for this reflects the individual tastes, and more especially the standard of living of any particular family unit. The lowest reported was 2/6d per week for an unmarried man whose aged mother cooked for him and herself in their small compound, while the highest was £5.5.0 (105/-) given by the District Head to his wife for the meat, fish, rice, chickens, condiments, oil, etc. In about two-thirds of the cases, however, the figures fell between 3/- and 5/- per household per week. If the person had any identification with urban life, as several did who were in Magumeri for the farming season, then this weekly expenditure seemed to be somewhat higher, ranging between 5/- and 9/- per week.

Using 3/- to 5/- as the weekly market money that the rural peasant householder spends on additional necessities for his staple foods (median value of roughly 4/-) an annual minimum for this part of the peasant diet can be set at about £10.0.0 for the average (four person) family. That is to say, the figures from budget interviews in combination with the survey material, give a rough estimate of the minimum amount(measured in cash values) required to keep this constructed "average" household unit in its nutrient requirements at prevailing (1955-57) prices — this is £4l sterling per annum (approximately $125.00).(1)

• 262 Although the consumption of millet porridge is fairly standard for all levels of the population - what goes into the soup, and the scale of differences among other foods eaten, varies with socio-

(1) This does not mean that the average family buys $125.00 worth of food per year since almost every family grows some part of its nutrient requirements. See above p.272 for the approximate amounts of millet produced by various occupation groups.

• 262 economic and rural/urban status. In upper class households, food may 262 264 be taken regularly three, four, or even five times during a day, with a larger variety in the items included. Thus in the household of an N.A. employee in Magumeri, there are four separate meals in one day, and sometimes five - (1) early in the morning just after rising, millet porridge and a plain soup is taken, plus a small course of bèlèm (milk, rice or wheat, and sugar); (2) at about nine a.m., a light meal of bèlèm, some cooked rice and soup, and/or milk; (3) at twelve noon, chicken and rice, then (4) at seven p.m., millet porridge. Often a light meal of chicken and rice or even some fresh vegetables in season 262 is eaten in mid-afternoon. Because of the much richer variety of foods available from all over Nigeria, as well as the outside world, in tins, bottles or dehydrated condition, the city diet is more various and also somewhat more expensive for everyone, except the most indigent,

Clothing

294 The importance of clothing and cloth to the Kanuri is clearly observable in Bornu. Singer sewing machines (pedal powered) are everywhere in the area, only the smallest hamlets being, at present, without them. In Magumeri, there were between six and eight constantly in use over a seventeen month period. On market day more machines appear from the city and surrounding towns, in the special tailors en- 441 closure at the market. When the cash crop is sold to the "scale" men, there is always a store of cloth kept by these buyers, who know that the peasant is very likely to purchase some textiles with his cash crop 286 receipt. Although there are very few words in the language for col- 192 ours, different textiles or the same material at different phases of [521] wear are discriminated. There is a plethora of words denoting the different kinds of materials; and news of new brands, price changes, and

443 the very end of the haggling. Thus it may take only two or three min-
435 utes to narrow a seller down from fifteen shillings to something a-
437 round five; but will it be 5/6d or 4/6d; 4/9d or 5/3d; or 5/- even? -
this last seesaw in pricing may take fifteen or twenty minutes. For although norms of price may be set for market day or longer on any commodity, there is always a small range of a few pennies around the norm which can be called the "real" price. This is not a single price, but really a range within which serious haggling takes place.

435 Finally, it should be noted that price in Bornu vary with
221 the seasons. In general, the harvest period from November to the end of December is a time of plenty, while July and August, the growing season, is a time of shortage. Prices on all commodities, except food, fall during the wet season when incomes are at their lowest and men are taking time off from their dry season activity to tend their fields. They then rise around the harvests when cash crops are sold and money is more plentiful. Thus the Maria Theresa dollar can be bought for 6/9d to 7/- in July, but goes up as high 8/- to 9/- in November after the
[262] harvests. Food is scarce during the wet season, surplus sellers are short (some even stop selling) and prices of bulk (per 200 lbs. bag) rise when other prices are falling. Similarly when other commodities are rising in price after the harvest, food, which is plentiful, falls in value.

The Organization of Trade

443 At the local level in Bornu, trade is handled by retailers. Under this heading come sellers of food items, cooked and uncooked foods, sundries, medicine, charms, medical services, builders, etc. With one